Research Article

Crossing Cultures: Exploring Intercultural Communicative Competence Among English Language Teachers

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) of English language teachers in a subset of junior and senior high schools in the Philippines, a multicultural educational setting. The study examines teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and adaptability toward ICC in light of the growing significance of cultural sensitivity in language instruction. Data were collected from 58 English teachers using a quantitative research design and validated survey instruments that were modified from well-known ICC frameworks. Findings indicate that teachers are, on the whole, positively inclined towards ICC (grand mean = 3.58, interpreted as "Always"), more so in the awareness of cultural differences and appreciation of cultural diversity. Teachers are, however, moderately knowledgeable (grand mean = 2.75, interpreted as "Knowledgeable"), with significant lacunas in comprehending cross-cultural adjustment phases (mean = 2.54) and socio-political environments. For adaptability, the teachers scored highest in Social Confirmation (grand mean = 3.35) and lowest in Social Composure (grand mean = 2.86), reflecting difficulties in dealing with tense or uneasy intercultural encounters. Statistical analysis showed that attitudes and knowledge strongly predict teachers' adaptability (F = 18.748, p < .001). The study emphasizes the necessity of focused educational programs that promote theoretical knowledge as well as useful tactics for negotiating cultural complexities in multicultural classrooms. In order to support culturally responsive teaching, the findings have implications for curriculum design, teacher education, and policy formation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language competence is one of the skills needed by language educators to teach the different macro skills necessary for the holistic mastery of language. However, one of the important competencies that is often neglected by most educators is intercultural competence. Leaners are unique in their given cultural background, which may create challenges in teaching and learning. Cengage (2023) elaborated that cultural differences may impact learners' experiences and outcomes. Relatively, the Philippines is a place of cultural diversity, a multicultural community where learners from different cultural backgrounds are concentrated in one classroom. The knowledge of teachers on intercultural competence is still new, unexplored, and rarely implemented and practiced.

Learners come to school with their Indigenous Knowledge or their schema of their given culture. They were given the chance to communicate and collaborate thus making them learn about other cultures. According to Jpiersol (2023), interaction can help students develop a sense of empathy and understanding for people who may have different experiences or perspectives. However, challenges may also arise due to differences in culture. Sultana (2023) says that one of the most significant challenges is meeting the individual needs of students with different learning styles and abilities. She further discussed that another challenge is managing cultural differences among students.

With the aforementioned cultural diversity, this is where intercultural competence comes in useful—and is a must in today's world. Building Intercultural knowledge is a major competence in fostering cultural understanding. The integration or mastery of intercultural communicative competence can strengthen or deepen awareness of cultural understanding. Thus, this study can help teachers practice this competence through reflective actions or behavior and can promote culturally responsive instruction or pedagogy. This study can also help the administration to design necessary measures to promote awareness of intercultural communicative competence and build a more suitable learning environment for culturally diverse classrooms. Will and Najarro (2022) said that culturally responsive teaching is using students' customs, characteristics, experiences, and perspectives as tools for better classroom instruction. It's the kind of teaching that helps students of color see themselves and their communities as belonging in schools and other academic spaces, leading to more engagement and success.

This challenge of cultural diversity was also shouldered by the English language teachers in a multicultural community. Students from different cultural backgrounds meet in the school where they learn and act according to their cultural backgrounds, thus making the need for teachers to master Intercultural Communicative Competence. This study looked at the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) of English teachers in some junior and senior high schools in the Philippines. It focused on their attitudes, knowledge, and ability to adapt to culturally diverse classrooms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the first and most comprehensive frameworks on intercultural competence is that of Deardoff (2009), which is a foundational collection of volumes that focuses on intercultural competence within various contexts. The idea of Deardoff supported Byram's (1997) model of ICC (Intercultural Communication Competence), a theoretical construct that has a considerable impact on curriculum development and teaching. Darla Deardorff's Intercultural Competence Model is based on five elements : attitude, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. This model provides a framework that can be utilized to guide a curriculum that promotes intercultural competence and assessment of learning outcomes Deardoff's framework of Intercultural Competence illustrates that an individual can have the requisite attitudes to integrate appropriate behavior and communication. Practicing the necessary knowledge and skills may ensure an individual is more effective and relevant in their intercultural interactions in the school. With flexibility, adaptability, and empathy, one can be even more effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions.
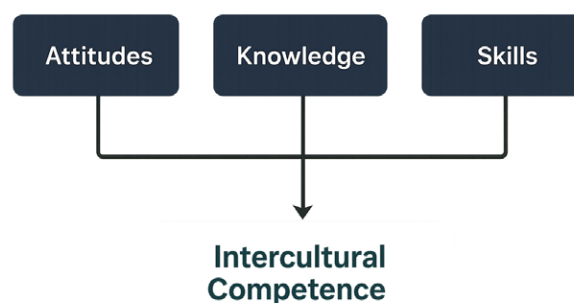

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

This framework also illustrates that intercultural competence is a lifelong process. There is no one point at which an individual becomes completely interculturally competent. Thus, it is important to pay as much attention to the development process of how one acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as one does to the actual aspects of intercultural competence and as such, critical reflection becomes a powerful tool in the process of intercultural competence development.

Language teachers are one of the targeted proponents of intercultural competence because culture and language are interconnected. Language is transmitted culturally, thus, language is a part of the culture. The meanings of a particular language represent the culture of a specific group. To communicate means to do so with the culture which is its reference point, thus English teachers should be equipped with intercultural competence since they are the ones who teach the language.

There are numerous studies that discuss the importance of Intercultural Competence (IC) in language teaching. The study of Pandarangga (2021) reiterates that the integration of intercultural competence can help students acquire linguistically and instill intercultural competence that can help them communicate appropriately with real-life situations, and increase awareness of cultural differences in values, norms, behaviors, and ways of thinking. Dvorianchykova *et al.* (2022) concluded that the students' IC is effectively formed with the

help of special programs for preparing students for intercultural interaction, training on the formation of intercultural communication skills and competence, lectures, and practical courses on cross-cultural psychology.

With integrated programs for Intercultural IC, teachers nowadays have been developing models to enhance intercultural competence among students. Tran and Duong (2018) tested the effectiveness of the intercultural communicative language teaching (ICLT) model and the findings revealed that EFL learners' language competence and intercultural competence had similar patterns of improvement. Upon entry into the educational system, one should be equipped with Intercultural Competence. Salazar and Aguero (2018) identified the Intercultural Competence of European student teachers, which suggested the need to focus on intercultural awareness and attitudes. The same study was conducted by Bernatt *et al.* (2020), which provides evidence that teacher preparation programs should provide opportunities for teacher candidates to explore diverse cultures. They also elaborated on the need to continue to prepare all teachers as culturally competent while targeting recruitment efforts of a more diverse population of teacher candidates.

To be at par with global competence it is a necessity to form intercultural competence. According to Khanbalaeva (2023), intercultural competence is a need in this modern socio-cultural world and pedagogical approaches. The study of Lee et.al (2023) on integrating Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in EFL classrooms showed and suggested that ICC is conducive to adolescent EFL students' intercultural development as well as their English learning motivation and outcome.

In the Philippine setting, on the other hand, Ang (2018) suggested internationalization programs and strategies to develop intercultural competence for global education. She further concluded that, as intercultural competence is a work in progress, it can be developed and enhanced by education, formation, and training. As such, the suggested programs and strategies to develop intercultural competence for global education would be most useful in making a difference globally. Garcia (2022), in his case study on the Integration of Intercultural Communicative Competence of English teachers, determined the integration of intercultural communicative competence of English teachers in higher education and concludes that there is a need to strengthen the integration of intercultural communicative competence in language courses especially in   Purposive Communication along components of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) resources and intercultural activities and assessments. Integration of ICC (Intercultural Communicative Competence) has been limited to the lessons and units dedicated to the explicit instruction of intercultural communication in the course.

In the current educational discourse, diversity is an important concept that demands attention and consideration from educators and the government. For this reason, the teacher holds a central role in considering various forms of difference. The Department of Education (DepEd) memorandum no. 306 s. 2009, the Result-Based Performance Management System for the School Year 2023-2024, which aims to improve teachers' career productivity and teaching competence, in Key Result Areas on Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, classroom observation indicator no. 7 states that "Established a learner-centered culture by using teaching strategies that respond to their linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds" is the integration and evidence of the intercultural competence of teachers. However, most of the teachers cannot satisfactorily meet the standards of an observer. According to PPST (Philippine Professional Standard for Teachers) support materials module 17, it is indeed a great challenge for teachers to design teaching strategies that respond to students' diversities in line with their linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds. The study by Paulite (2020) on the effectiveness of classroom observation tools said that one of the common challenges encountered by teachers is balancing the students' learning needs.

3. METHODOLOGY
This study employed a quantitative research design, which involves structured data collection and statistical analysis to draw broad conclusions. It focuses on objective measurement and statistical analysis of data to understand patterns, make predictions, and generalize outcomes. The methods of surveys, questionnaires, experiments, and observations allow the measurement and analysis of numerical data, enabling researchers to identify patterns and draw statistical conclusions (Pentang, 2023).

3.1. Research Respondents
The respondents of this study were fifty-eight high school English language teachers of selected senior and junior high schools in the Philippines.

3.2. Data Gathering Instruments
The data this research for were collected through survey questionnaires adapted from Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) to assess the respondents' knowledge and attitude and adaptability, and from Smrekar (2015) to determine the perceived benefits of IC. Also, the questionnaire from the study of Maguddayao (2018) was used to identify the level of adaptability of the respondents. The questions were modified to fit the context of the study. After undergoing reliability testing, the modified questionnaires showed high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
4.1. Attitudes of Language Teachers Toward IC

Table 1. Attitude of English Language teachers towards Intercultural Competence

Indicator	Junior Highschool Teachers	Senior Highschool Teachers	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I pay attention to spoken and nonverbal signs of communication in different cultural languages.	3.55	3.65	3.60	Always
I accept the existence of cultural features (institutions (educational, Judiciary...), traditions (meals, feasts...) artefacts (clothes, tools food, games, habitat...)) that may be different from those of my own culture.	3.78	3.82	3.80	Always
I am open to learning the language of the different ethnic groups present in the institution.	3.59	3.61	3.60	Always
I am ready to try to communicate using other ethnic languages and to behave in a manner considered appropriate by others.	3.36	3.44	3.40	Always
I Reflect on the consequences of my decisions and choices.	3.57	3.63	3.60	Always
I take on various roles appropriate to different situations.	3.4	3.52	3.46	Always
I try to understand differences in behaviors, values, attitudes, and styles.	3.77	3.83	3.80	Always
I show interest in new cultural aspects.	3.6	3.66	3.63	Always
I deal with the different ways of perceiving, expressing, interacting, and behaving.	3.45	3.53	3.49	Always
I adapt my behavior to communicate appropriately with various cultures.	3.4	3.46	3.43	Always
Grand Mean	3.55	3.61	3.58	Always

Table 1 shows the result on the attitude of English teachers towards Intercultural competence, with mean scores ranging from 3.40 to 3.80, indicating a generally positive attitude towards intercultural competence. There is a high score in recognizing cultural differences, accepting the existence of different cultural features, and showing interest in new cultural aspects. However, being ready to communicate using other ethnic languages and adapting behavior to communicate appropriately have the lowest mean scores of 3.40 and 3.43 respectively.

The high mean scores suggested that English teachers are aware of and value the importance of intercultural communication are inclined to learn other cultural aspects and are ready to get along with people who vary in behavior, style, and attitude. The consistent recognition of cultural features indicated a willingness to understand and appreciate diverse backgrounds. Teachers' awareness of cultural factors enriches the learning experience, fosters inclusivity, and promotes effective communication among students from diverse backgrounds in the English language classroom.

The study of Tian and Lowe (2023) focused on enhancing Intercultural Communication Competence and reiterated that there is a strong positive attitude toward cultural diversity, impacting communication skills contributing to cultural knowing. Moreover, Ilie (2019) said that learning about other cultures and developing intercultural communication competence and skills can help facilitate multicultural encounters and can lead to more openness and tolerance towards significant others.

Having the willingness to accept and learn cultural diversity in the classroom would generally impact teaching and learning. It can promote inclusivity and eradicate racial discrimination. Students can feel a sense of belongingness inside the classroom if the teacher himself is willing to understand their culture.

Nonetheless, the lowest score in adapting behavior suggested some challenges in practical application, indicating a gap between knowledge and implementation. This data implies that while teachers possess a strong theoretical understanding and attitude toward intercultural competence, there may be a need for professional development focused on practical application in adapting behavior and behaving properly and considerably acceptable to diverse classroom settings.

Relatively, Erin (2017) said that most of us find language learning difficult because it challenges our mind or our brain to construct new cognitive frameworks and time because it requires sustained and consistent practice. Thus, strategies that include training sessions that emphasize role-playing and real-life scenarios are recommended. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that awareness alone does not guarantee effective intercultural communication; practical skills are essential for successful interaction (Byram, 1997). Therefore, programs on Intercultural competence focusing on practical application are a good idea. The study by Cates and Jones (2018) highlighted that teacher preparation programs

that incorporated intercultural communication training led to improved attitudes and readiness to teach in diverse classrooms. This aligns with the findings that teachers value cultural differences but may lack practical application. However, Paris and Alim (2017) advocated for culturally sustaining pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of teachers valuing and integrating students' cultural backgrounds into their teaching. The high mean scores in recognizing cultural features suggested a foundation for implementing such pedagogical approaches.

Having a positive attitude towards different cultures and religions is crucial for several reasons. It promotes understanding that can lead to more effective and less conflict communication. It is essential for fostering understanding and empathy. It does not only enhance interpersonal relationships but also contributes to a more inclusive and collaborative environment.

4.2. The knowledge and comprehension of language teachers toward IC

Table 2. Knowledge and Comprehension of English Language Teachers Towards IC

Indicator	Junior Highschool Teachers	Senior Highschool Teachers	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I know the essential norms and taboos of other cultures (Ifugao, Gaddang, Ilocano, and Igorot, etc.).	2.60	2.72	2.66	Knowledgeable
I could contrast important aspects of other cultures with my own.	2.80	2.86	2.83	Knowledgeable
I could cite important historical and socio-political factors that shape my own and other cultures.	2.62	2.70	2.66	Knowledgeable
I could describe interactional behaviors common among the ethnic groups in social and professional areas.	2.81	2.91	2.86	Knowledgeable
I know how to adapt my communicative repertoire to the social and cultural context within which communication is taking place.	2.90	2.98	2.94	Knowledgeable
I know some rules relative to social practices in certain domains in other cultures (Greetings, daily needs, sexuality, death, etc.)	2.85	2.93	2.89	Knowledgeable
I could describe a model of cross-cultural adjustment stages.	2.50	2.58	2.54	Knowledgeable
I could cite various learning processes and strategies for learning about adjusting to the host culture.	2.72	2.82	2.77	Knowledgeable
I recognized signs of cultural stress and some strategies for overcoming it.	2.53	2.61	2.57	Knowledgeable
I could cite a definition of culture and describe its components and complexities.	2.70	2.78	2.74	Knowledgeable
Grand Mean	2.72	2.78	2.75	Knowledgeable

Table 2 shows the Knowledge and Comprehension of teachers towards Intercultural Competence. As reflected in the table, Mean Scores range from 2.54 to 2.94, indicating a moderate level of knowledge about other cultures. The highest score is adapting communicative repertoire to social and cultural context (2.89) indicated in Indicator no.5, while the Lowest score describes a model of cross-cultural adjustment stages (2.54) indicated in Indicator no. 7.

The highest score suggested that English teachers could adjust their behavior and communicative repertoire to tailor their communication to be more culturally sensitive and relevant. This highlighted teachers' adaptive learning processes and cultural sensitivity in creating an inclusive and effective learning environment. It underscores the significance of a continuous commitment to understanding and integrating cultural diversity into educational practices.

Nguyen and Benham (2019) found that teachers with higher cultural awareness are more effective in their teaching practice which helps them break down cultural barriers and build

bridges, by learning how to appreciate and respect those who are different from them. Similarly, Van Der Zee & De Vries's (2019) study underlined the importance of fostering intercultural awareness to improve teamwork and productivity in diverse settings.

An adaptive learning environment is essential to empower students to reach their full potential and to fully engage in learning. If an individual is valued and accepted, they are likely to improve. This provides equitable learning opportunities for the students. Nevertheless, there is still a need for teachers to enhance their understanding and comprehension of other cultural aspects to enable them to adapt their communication styles to different contexts, avoiding misunderstandings and misinterpretations in cross-cultural interactions.

This indicated a need for more comprehensive training in cultural history and socio-political contexts. Professional development programs should focus on enhancing teachers' knowledge of cultural complexities and adjustment processes to better equip them for teaching in diverse environments.

Incorporating cultural studies into the curriculum could enhance understanding and appreciation of different backgrounds. The moderate knowledge scores in the data indicated an area for growth, suggesting that enhancing teachers' understanding of cultural norms could lead to better educational outcomes. Hence, there is a need for critical cultural awareness. According to Shakya *et al.* (2020), critical cultural awareness is essential for educators to navigate and address cultural complexities in the classroom. The lower scores in understanding historical and socio-political factors highlighted the need for professional development that focuses on these aspects.

Filipinos were generally used to living in a diverse community where they experienced cross-cultural adjustment. It is where they learn to live in a new culture and behave in ways that are culturally appropriate. It can be challenging and may involve feelings of discomfort or culture shock. Thus, an individual should be familiar with the adjustment stage of cross-cultural experience. Research by Ang *et al.* (2017) emphasized that cultural intelligence (CQ) can be developed through targeted training. The observed gaps in knowledge about cross-cultural adjustment stages suggest that teachers would benefit from CQ-focused professional development programs.

4.3. The Level of Adaptability of Teachers in terms of IC

Table 3. Level of adaptability of the English language teachers in terms of IC

Indicator	Junior Highschool Teachers	Senior Highschool Teachers	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Social confirmation				
1. I try to make the other person feel important.	3.48	3.54	3.51	Always
2. I am verbally and nonverbally supportive of other people.	3.55	3.59	3.57	Always
3. When someone makes a negative comment about me, I respond with a witty comeback.	2.92	3.02	2.97	Often
Grand Mean	3.32	3.38	3.35	Always
Social Experience	**3.43**	**3.49**		
1. I try to make the other person feel good.	3.1	3.18	3.46	Always
2. I like to be active in different social groups.	3.2	3.26	3.14	Often
3. I enjoy meeting new people.	3.24	3.31	3.23	Often
Grand Mean	3.1	3.24	3.28	Always
Social composure	**2.7**	**2.78**		
1. When talking, my posture seems easy and relaxed.	2.95	3	3.17	Often
2. When I embarrass myself, I often make a joke about it.	2.5	2.64	2.74	Often
3. When I self-disclose, I know that I am revealing.	2.81	2.9	2.97	Often
4. I often make jokes when in tense situations.	3.18	3.22	2.57	Often
Grand Mean	2.9	2.98	2.86	Often
Articulation	**2.83**	**2.89**		
1. I am aware of how intimate disclosures are.	2.97	3.03	3.20	Often
2. In most social situations, I feel relaxed and easy.	3.05	3.13	2.94	Often
3. I "mix" well at social functions	3.38	3.48	2.86	Often
Grand Mean	2.62	2.7	3.00	Often
Wit	**3.02**	**3.1**		
1. I find it easy to get along with new people.	3.28	3.34	3.09	Often
2. I try to be warm when communicating with one another.	3.14	3.2	3.43	Always
3. People think I am witty.	3.08	3.14	2.66	Often
Grand Mean	2.92	3.02	3.06	Often

Indicator	Junior Highschool Teachers	Senior Highschool Teachers	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Appropriate disclosure	**3.11**	**3.18**		
1. While I am talking, I think about how the other person feels.	3.08	3.14	3.31	Always
2. I know how appropriate my self-disclosures are.	3.48	3.54	3.17	Often
3. I enjoy socializing with various groups of people.	3.55	3.59	3.11	Often
4. My voice sounds calm when I talk with others.	2.92	3.02	2.97	Often
Grand Mean			3.12	Often
Grand Mean			3.11	Often

Table 3 indicates the level of Adaptability of English teachers in six (6) categories: Social confirmation, Social Experience, Social Composure, Articulation, Wit, and Appropriate disclosure. Based on the result, the highest mean score is Indicator no. 3 under Social Confirmation, "I am verbally and nonverbally supportive to other people" with a mean of 3.57. While Indicator no. 3 on Social Composure, "I often make jokes when in tense situations" has the lowest mean of 2.57.

The findings indicated that while teachers are generally supportive and strive to create a positive environment, they may struggle with self-disclosure and managing awkward situations. This suggested a need for developing emotional intelligence and adaptability in social interactions. English teachers are evidently high in categories of Social Confirmation and Social Experience with a grand mean of 3.35 and 3.28 respectively.". This generally suggests that teachers can seek positive validation from others and are skilled in learning and growing through interactions with other cultures.

Kim and Gudykunst (2021) said that cultural experiences shape social identities and influence communication patterns among individuals from diverse backgrounds, which discusses the role of social experiences in developing intercultural sensitivity and understanding. Moreover, Zhang and Harwood (2020) said that social confirmation influences intercultural communication effectiveness. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds seek confirmation of their social identities during interactions, and how this affects communication outcomes. On the other hand, Social Composure has the lowest grand mean of 2.86. This signifies that although teachers have the capacity to adjust to different social dynamics, cultural norms, or unexpected changes in conversations or events. There is still a need to manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively to navigate interactions gracefully and maintain a positive impression.

However, despite having challenges with social composure, teachers show a positive and proactive approach to improve and strengthen social composure. Learning composure is about acknowledging your inner world. It's about gaining an understanding that the only thing you can control is yourself (Taylor, 2020). Social composure enhances the ability to remain calm, confident, and poised in social situations, even under pressure, uncertainty, or stress. Training programs should include components on emotional intelligence, humor, and self-disclosure to improve teachers' overall adaptability in diverse cultural contexts. Encouraging peer interactions and feedback could enhance these skills.

A study by Brackett *et al.* (2019) indicated that emotional intelligence is crucial for teachers to effectively manage classroom dynamics and foster positive relationships with students. The strong scores in supportive behaviors corroborate this finding, while the lower scores in humor and self-disclosure suggest areas for improvement. Research by Schussler and Knapp (2019) highlighted the importance of social adaptability in fostering positive teacher-student relationships, especially in diverse classrooms. The findings reflected that while teachers excel in creating supportive environments, they may need further development in handling complex social interactions.

According to Villegas and Lucas (2019), culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to adapt their practices to meet the needs of diverse learners. The adaptability scores suggested that while teachers recognize the importance of supporting students, there is room for growth in their ability to navigate various social contexts effectively. Flexibility alone is not enough for successful interpersonal or professional interactions- emotional intelligence and self-regulation are equally essential. A well-rounded, effective teacher must combine adaptability with emotional regulation and cultural awareness to foster inclusive and productive interactions. This combination enhances both professional image and relational impact.

4.4. Significant Relationship of the Respondents' Attitudes and Knowledge to their Level of Adaptability

Table 4. Relationship of the respondents' attitudes and knowledge to their level of adaptability

Model	Sum of lSquares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Regression	4.398	2	2.199	18.748	.000b	Significant
Residual	3.753	32	.117			
Total	8.152	34				

a. Dependent Variable: Adaptability
b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitudes, Knowledge

Based on Table 4, the results of the regression analysis reveal that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' attitudes and knowledge and their level of adaptability towards intercultural communicative competence The model yielded an F-value of 18.748 with a significance level (p-value) of .000, which is less than the standard alpha level of 0.05. This indicates that the combination of attitudes and knowledge significantly predicts the adaptability of the respondents. The regression sum of squares (4.398) compared to the residual sum of squares (3.753) suggests that a substantial proportion of the variance in adaptability is explained by the model, with a total variance of 8.152.

These findings imply that positive attitudes and sufficient knowledge about intercultural communication contexts play a critical role in enhancing the adaptability of both students and teachers. When individuals understand intercultural communication and hold favorable attitudes towards it, they are more likely to adjust and respond effectively to intercultural tasks and challenges, making them better equipped in teaching and learning scenarios that require higher-order thinking and real-world applications. Therefore, the significant predictive relationship identified in the current study supports the notion that both cognitive (knowledge) and affective (attitudes) factors are vital for shaping how teachers and students engage with and adapt to varied intercultural tasks. These findings have implications for professional development programs and curriculum design, suggesting that both knowledge-building and attitude-shaping initiatives should be integrated to improve intercultural adaptability.

The significant relationship between attitude and knowledge and the other variables suggests that an individual's overall attitude towards intercultural communication was closely linked to their level of Adaptability in terms of social experiences, social composure, articulation, wit, appropriate disclosure, and overall communication competence. Fostering a positive attitude may be a key factor in enhancing their Adaptability in terms of intercultural communication skills. Similarly, an individual's knowledge about intercultural communication is an important predictor of their actual communication performance and competence in cultural adaptation. Improving intercultural knowledge may lead to better adaptability to communication outcomes.

Moreover, a positive and open mindset towards different cultures is essential for successfully navigating new environments, building relationships, overcoming challenges fostering effective communication when interacting with people from diverse backgrounds; essentially, a receptive attitude towards cultural differences greatly facilitates the process of adapting to a new culture or various cultures.

This result corroborates the study of Hua *et al.* (2019), which said that Individual adaptability (I-ADAPT) positively relates to cross-cultural adjustment, mediated by cultural identification and perceived stress. Furthermore, Cultural adaptation, influenced by personal characteristics, social support, and environment, was critical for successful intercultural communication (Hu, 2023). To enhance cultural adaptation and intercultural competence, it is essential to provide appropriate support and training, considering these factors. Overall, exposure to various cultures and participation in international programs emerge as strong predictors of improved intercultural communication skills and adaptability.

Cultural competence and social networks play a pivotal role in knowledge sharing and integration, facilitating academic progress (Latif *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, in international practicum settings, supervisors and coordinators emphasize the significance of intercultural knowledge in aiding preservice teachers' and interns' cultural adaptation and professional performance (Kham, 2022). The role of attitude and knowledge in adaptation to intercultural communication. Studies have shown that a positive attitude towards cultural differences, as well as a strong knowledge base about cultural norms and communication styles, can significantly improve intercultural interaction and understanding.

5. CONCLUSION

Teachers show a positive attitude toward Intercultural Communicative Competence in recognizing cultural differences, accepting the existence of different cultural features, and showing interest in new cultural aspects. However, they show difficulties in practical application in adapting behavior and behaving properly, and are considerably acceptable to diverse classroom settings. Teachers show a moderate awareness of intercultural communication competence. Teachers could adjust their behavior and communicative styles for culturally sensitive communication. Nevertheless, they struggle with learning cultural complexities. Teachers are generally supportive and actively work to create a positive environment for intercultural communication, which shows a commitment to fostering inclusivity and understanding among diverse students. Yet they lack strategies or confidence in navigating potentially uncomfortable intercultural interactions.

There is a significant relationship between teachers' Attitudes and Knowledge to their level of Adaptability. Attitude and knowledge are significant predictor of their effectiveness in

communication and their ability to adapt to different cultural contexts. Teacher who shows a positive attitude toward Intercultural communication competence with an open and optimistic mindset are more likely to engage effectively with diverse cultures. Similarly, an individual's knowledge of intercultural communication significantly influences adaptation performance in real communication scenarios. Teachers who are knowledgeable are better equipped to adjust their behaviors and communication styles to fit different cultural contexts. Attitude, knowledge, and adaptability are necessary to prepare individuals for this highly diverse world. This foster openness to new experiences and perspectives, allowing individuals to engage with different cultures without preconceived biases. These factors influence interactions, reducing misunderstandings and allowing one to adjust their communication styles and behaviors based on the cultural context, ensuring clearer exchanges. These three aspects generally affect intercultural communication competence.

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